

JEAN LOUIS GUEZ DE BALZAC'S *LE PRINCE*: A REVALUATION

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I

The reassessment of Jean Louis Guez de Balzac's work, begun at the turn of this century, is still incomplete.¹ Nevertheless, what has been done already shows that, while his writings can no longer earn him the reputation they won him in his own day, there is yet more substance in them than the contemptuous references to him as a "faiseur de phrases," current since the end of the seventeenth century, would indicate. A reappraisal makes it clear that Balzac's ideas, confused as they often are, foreshadow most of the conceptions which were to give the later seventeenth century in France its characteristic stamp: the notions of order and measure; those of *bienséance*; the ideology that arose with the rise of absolutism, in both its political and religious manifestations; the ideas concerning language and literature which gave to the greatest writing of the period its "classic" mould. What follows attempts to do no more than give the gist of Balzac's political ideas by examining one of his works, *Le Prince*, taking into consideration the milieu in which it was written and the form in which it was cast.

II

Guez de Balzac lived from 1596 or 1597 to 1654, a period of turmoil in the history of France, during which great changes were afoot. The wars of religion were followed, after a brief respite during the reign of Henry IV, by the prolonged disturbances of the Fronde, in the course of which the power of the great feudatories and of the *parlements* was definitely broken, and absolutism emerged triumphant, personified in the figure of Louis XIV. To those of this period who could see beyond the superficial clash and play of events, the new tendencies towards centralization and authoritarianism in all spheres were clearly visible. Balzac was one who showed this prescience: "Under the same faces," he writes, "I see other men, and in the same kingdom, a different State. In appearance things remain as they were, but in substance they are changed."²

In his youth, in 1615, on a visit to Holland, Balzac had been fired by the nobility of the people's struggle for freedom from Spanish domination, and in a burst of enthusiasm penned the following remarkable passage:

"A people is free once it will no longer serve. After having long struggled for its life, it fights at last for victory; after having endured all, it is capable of all; and when it has no more hope, it has no more fear.

¹ Cf. G. Guillaumie, *J. L. Guez de Balzac et la prose française*, Paris, 1927; J. B. Sabrié, *Les idées religieuses de J. L. Guez de Balzac*, Paris, 1913; J. Desclaireuil, "Le 'Prince' de Balzac et son actualité pour le public de son

temps," *Revue Littéraire de la France*, Janvier/Mars, 1949; *idem*, *Les idées politiques de Balzac*, Paris, 1908. (I have been unable to get hold of a copy of this last work.)

² *Le Prince*, 1631, p. 165.

The Provinces of the Low Countries, which have broken out of the King of Spain's hold, because he tightened it too much, owe their freedom to their extreme servitude, enjoy peace because they were forced into war, give warning to all Rulers of what duties they owe their peoples, and provide all peoples with a memorable example of what they can do against their Rulers. They have justice on their side because necessity was theirs. They deserve to have God alone for King, since they could not endure a King for God; and to depend upon His power alone, since they fought His quarrel alone. He who was their master, having become their enemy, has lost his right over them for having violated God's right over himself. In wishing to treat his subjects like animals, he forced them to remember that they were men; and in doing away with civil rights by putting their Ambassadors to death, compelled them to return to natural right by the acquisition of their liberty. There is nothing remarkable then in his losing the country whose people he wished to ruin; if those to whose faith he did violence should have forgotten their allegiance."³

Returning to France, he found different conditions. France was in a situation quite other than that of the Low Countries, where the struggle for independence inevitably led to the assertion of the freedom of conscience, of speech, of the individual, which so distinguished Holland at that time. Almost two centuries were to pass before France became ripe for a struggle similar in essence; and then it was to be on a scale, material and spiritual, and fraught with consequences which dwarfed its Dutch precursor. The interim is characterized by an accommodation of the fundamentals of the existing social structure to the changing needs of French society.

Balzac's outlook was anything but that of a visionary: his was fundamentally a realistic, practical cast of mind. Indeed, it was precisely to the lack of realism, the fanatical fervour and intolerance of his predecessors that he attributed many of the ills France had suffered for so long. To restore the country to health and vigour by the application of such means as were to hand was in his view the imperative requirement of the times. "Human affairs," he writes, "need to be handled in a human fashion. That is to say, in ways at once practicable and familiar, which derive as much from the body as from the mind; with reasons which are sometimes accessible to human understanding and do not always remain in the higher regions of the spirit."⁴ The appeal in Balzac is almost always to experience: ". . . If we want to live, we must not detach ourselves completely from the body nor separate ourselves from matter. Our reason must not withdraw itself from our immediate interests and the business at hand; it must not imagine it can do everything and overcome everything, nor believe it can beat the Turks with words or conquer the world by subtlety."⁵

In Balzac's view, to have a reasonable attitude to things means to judge

³ *Discours sur l'état politique des Provinces Unies*, in *Oeuvres*, 1665, II, pp. 482-483.

⁴ *Aristippe ou de la Cour*, in *Oeuvres*, 1665, II, p. 150. *Aristippe* was ready for publication in

1652, but was not published until after Balzac's death, in 1658.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

them as they in fact are,⁶ and not aspire to achieve more than is in the given circumstances actually possible.

"The world," he writes, "has long since lost its innocence. We live in a corrupt century, in the declining age of Nature. All is weak and sick in the assemblies of men. If therefore you wish to govern well, to work successfully for the good of the state, accommodate yourself to its defects and imperfections. Get rid of that inconvenient virtue of which your age is not capable. Accept what you may not be able to reform. . . . In this evil world . . . let us not quibble over appearances so long as we retain the essential content . . . why not agree to a compromise which would be reasonable from the point of view of utility, and which, because of present necessity, would not be dishonest, a compromise which generosity itself and a noble heart must accept?"⁷

This does not mean that after his return from Holland Balzac was unaware of the virtues of liberty,⁸ or of the peculiar suitability of Holland as a place of residence for those intent upon making their life's work an inquiry into truth founded upon a rigorously critical examination of all received opinion. He understood the voluntary exile of Descartes with whom, for a time at least, he was on very friendly terms; he even occasionally toyed with the idea of joining him there.

But such a detached retirement was, in truth, not for him. He was profoundly concerned with the condition of France, which it was his ambition to help restore to a state more in keeping with his notion of France as a great European, even world, power. "Politics," he wrote in 1641, "has ever been my mistress." And it was to this that from the first he turned his attention.

It is pertinent at this point to ask what possibilities were open to a writer

⁶ "... Il est necessaire de considerer chaque chose en sa situation, et en sa posture naturelle pour en juger sainement . . ." (*Apologie pour M. de Balzac*, in *Oeuvres*, II, Supplement, p. 138.

⁷ *Aristippe*, in *Oeuvres*, 1665, II, pp. 173-6.

⁸ On the contrary: he was on many occasions to spring to the defence of those of his acquaintance who had, in his view, been unjustly persecuted by the State (see, for instance, his long and excellently reasoned defence of *Le Cid* against the official criticism made at the behest of Richelieu), or who, in a purely individual capacity, chose to behave in ways that did not conform to the standards he himself accepted as being in general necessary if peace and order were to reign. Even on a question on which he felt strongly, for instance on the question of the French Protestants, he gives proof of a degree of moderation surely unusual for the times. "I take no part in the passions of the vulgar," he wrote to the celebrated pastor Du Moulin

in 1632, "who never retain their freedom of judgment and will admit no wrong on their own side or good on their opponents'. As far as I am concerned the day seems lovely to me no matter out of what cloud it first appears. . . . Also, it is a kind of sacrilege to want to take away from anyone the gifts that come from God, and I feel I should be doing injury to Him who has given you so much if I did not acknowledge that you have received so much, and offend our common benefactor in a matter in which we are on opposite sides. It is true that I have not always flattered 'les mauvais François,' and I became a little heated against the authors of the last troubles we had. . . . Still, . . . I am far from wanting to insult you in your misfortunes . . . I, who wrote that everyone would bless the King if after having broken the pride of the rebels, he was not to insist on adding to the misfortunes of those already afflicted. I loathe the persecutors of those who surrender as much as I loathe those who violate holy places . . ."

who chose to make his reputation by writing about politics in a practical, realistic manner. This is the more necessary owing to the fact that Balzac has been criticized for not writing a more systematic treatise on politics.⁹ It was certainly not with the intention of writing a "long and pompous panegyric of Louis XIII . . . a brilliant, extended piece of rhetoric,"¹⁰ that Balzac began his work. On the contrary, even Malitourne admits that Balzac apparently understood a great deal more about politics than is apparent from the completed part of the work he originally planned as a substantial contribution to political philosophy.¹¹ What then prevented him from finishing this work?

The answer in two words is, of course, the times. With the consolidation and extension of royal power there came *pari passu* an increasing regimentation of opinion. During the first decade of Louis XIII's reign, the balance of power between the King, the great nobles and the *parlements* was precarious: there was still a possibility of a general settlement on the lines of a constitutional monarchy. But the adamancy of all parties finally made this impossible, and by the middle of the second decade of his reign, the situation had greatly changed: the growing strength of the Court, increasingly successful in its military operations against the Protestant minority, allowed of more determined attacks on heterodox opinion, of which the trial of Théophile de Viau, the leading spirit among the Libertins, which lasted from 1623 to 1625, was the most sensational.

The trial of Théophile de Viau is of interest to us only because he had been a friend of Balzac's, whom he had known from 1615 when they were together in Holland. Balzac, already involved in controversy over the opinions he had voiced in his letters (the first volume of which was published in 1624) and no doubt fearing to be further implicated, attacked Théophile de Viau in a most cowardly and scurrilous fashion,¹² hoping thereby no doubt to ward off a danger which, as events were to show, in reality never existed.¹³

Nevertheless, though Balzac prudently retired from Paris in 1628 and refrained from publishing his elaborate defence against his critics (over ninety pages long in the folio edition of 1665!), he had neither given up his intention of writing a political treatise, nor altered his plan to lay bare (if we may judge from *Le Prince*), by a critical examination of contemporary events, the general principles of political science. In effect, the compromise with circumstances

⁹ By Malitourne who writes, "Balzac, s'il eut été moins préoccupé de l'ambition du style, auroit pu porter plus d'étendue dans ses dissertations politiques, et éclairer d'une manière plus positive les bases des Etats modernes . . ." *Oeuvres choisies de Balzac, de l'Académie Française*, précédées d'une notice (par) A. Malitourne, 2 Tom. en un volume, Paris, 1822, I, pp. 15-16.

¹⁰ In this manner does M. C. Hippeau describe *Le Prince*, in "Etude sur J. L. G. de Balzac," *Mem. de l'Acad. Impériale de Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Caen*, 1856, p. 348.

¹¹ " . . . Il avait profondément étudié le génie des anciennes révolutions, et retrouvé, pour ainsi dire, le secret d'Auguste, qui en

avait enchaîné le plus difficile, la politique des Romains, et surtout celle de l'adroit empereur qui les asservit est curieusement expliquée dans les lettres comprises sous le nom de Mécenas."

¹² He did so in two letters, one to Boisrobert and the other to Bouthillier, Bishop of Aire.

¹³ Lachèvre correctly says that once the trial of Théophile de Viau was over, all those who could have considered themselves compromised were for the most part left alone, provided they did not persist in voicing heterodox opinions. Cf. M. Lachèvre, *Les Oeuvres de Jean Dehenault Parisien (1611-1682)* Paris, 1922, p. xxix.

he advocated was in this work to be shown in its detailed application in the actual political practices of his day.¹⁴ It could not have been otherwise, for, as he had explained: "The *Republic* of Plato, the *Politics* of Aristotle, as much as you please; but I particularly recommend History to your young men. Without History Politics is but a ghost, hollow and insubstantial, which one manipulates by means of countless trivial scholastic distinctions and divisions in order to play games and amuse children. This fine Politics, separated from action and example, makes no sense even to itself. It requires a guide in the world; it needs interpreters in the assemblies of men. History alone therefore informs and organizes politics, gives it body and substance; and History alone is worthy of an exceedingly busy man, and of the speculations of an active mind."¹⁵

The first volume of *Le Prince* duly appeared in 1631 (parts of it had been circulating in manuscript since 1627 and had been sent to Richelieu in 1628). Accompanying the text were two letters to Richelieu, in which Balzac dwelt at length on the relations between Richelieu and the Queen Mother, deploring the fact that these were so strained and virtually shifting the blame for this, if not on to the Queen herself, at least on to her immediate entourage. "Your friend is a fool," Richelieu is said to have commented, "who told him that I was not on good terms with the Queen Mother? I had thought him a man of sense; but he is just a coxcomb."

Le Prince was not a success; it enjoyed some notoriety largely because it was censured by the Sorbonne,¹⁶ and was attacked on account of its "machievellian" tendencies, about which more will be said hereafter. It may, I believe, be fairly conjectured that the reception of the first part of the work made it plain to Balzac that a continuation would be a somewhat risky venture, for another part was to be an examination of the duties of the King's Minister; it is certain that, in accordance with his stated opinions on political writings, the material for this would have been provided by the events of the day—that is to say, the activities of Richelieu—and the guiding principles they disclosed (with which Balzac was in general in complete agreement), would have loomed large. In any event, apart from a not very illuminating fragment, no more is heard of this projected second part or of the third. Balzac thenceforth restricted himself to literary criticism, and to general considerations in the field of religion. When, towards the end of his life, he once more

¹⁴ It is significant to recall that, if we may trust Goulu (*Lettres de Phyllarque à Ariste*, Seconde Partie, Nancy, 1628, pp. 78 ff.), Balzac apparently at first intended to use a Prince of Wales as a model for the ideal prince, and must subsequently have changed his mind, perhaps in order to make the work more actual.

¹⁵ *Dissertations Politiques*, XI, "de l'utilité de l'histoire aux gens de la Cour," in *Oeuvres*, 1665, II, p. 494.

¹⁶ I have been unable to discover what passages the Sorbonne objected to, though I surmise that one point at least would have

been the portrayal of the King as already a divine being. Balzac felt that the objections had been raised by followers of Goulu. "Ce n'est ny zèle de religion, ny intérêt du public qui les fait agir. . . . C'est une vieille animosité . . . c'est la haine d'un mort qui est encore dans son tombeau: Ce sont ses restes qui me font la guerre, et dont quelques mauvais François se veulent servir pour décrier un ouvrage qui n'a pour fin l'honneur et le service du Roy." *Suite de la Seconde Partie des Lettres de Mr. de Balzac*, Edition II, Paris, 1637, p. 592.

turned to what he himself considered politics, it was in a manner and with a content far different from his earlier work in this sphere. *Aristippe ou de la Cour*, though it contains some fine passages obviously the product of mature reflection,¹⁷ nonetheless scarcely ever leaves the realm of generalities and is, in truth, very much a "livre de conduite"—under which rubric Sorel classifies it¹⁸ along with Della Casa's *Galateo*, and "all those Italian works written to teach people the practice of civil society."

We are consequently left with the single volume of *Le Prince* from which to form some notion of what in Balzac's view political writing ought to be when given substance by action and example. It must be emphasized that *Le Prince* is bound to yield a picture as incomplete as the work itself. We will get from it only *disjecta membra*, and it is necessary in assessing these constantly to bear in mind Balzac's own warning:

"From all that has been said above, it follows that it is necessary to consider everything in its context, and in its natural state, in order to be able to judge of it properly; and that if one had cut off the fingers of the most beautiful pair of hands in the world, they would be nothing more than bleeding lumps of dead flesh, and these beautiful hands would horrify those who had previously adored them. It is only too easy to choose a word, or a line, and, after having first lifted it out of a larger work, expose it to the scorn of the reader when his interest has waned and he no longer remembers what follows and what came before."

III

In writing the part of his work concerned with Louis XIII, Balzac found ready to hand a model which he transformed and adapted to his purposes: the mirror of princes.

Mirrors of princes are works in which the requirements (largely of an ethico-religious nature) for good rule by princes are codified. Since it is manifestly impossible to give here a detailed account of their development, and of the changes of emphasis to be noted in the attributes of princes making for rule beneficial to their subjects, the following somewhat general remarks will have to serve to introduce Balzac's *Le Prince*.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Je l'ay fait et refait une douzaine de fois," wrote Balzac to Conrart in December, 1652. "J'aye employé à le faire, toute ma science, toute mon expérience, tout mon esprit, tout celuy des autres. . . . Après . . . tant de veilles, et tant de travail, je serois bien atrapé, si le monde faisoit peu de cas de ces veilles, et de ce travail."

¹⁸ *Bibliothèque Française*, Paris, 1664, p. 53.

¹⁹ A note on the method I have adopted in presenting the various types of mirrors of princes may be helpful. The short compass allows of no more than a description of the elements which give each type its particular quality; and I have therefore, for the most

part, disregarded subsidiary features which, though present, do not affect the specific character of the type of mirror in question. With changed circumstances, elements once subsidiary come to the fore and, *mutatis mutandis*, elements once decisive fall into the background, so producing a new whole by a different interconnection of the parts. Thus, for instance, the Neoplatonic element, decisive only in the Renaissance mirrors, is already found as a quite secondary element, in Aegidius Romanus, *De Regimine Principum*, I, iii, 33 in the discussion of the four grades of virtue based on Macrobius. And he even says (III, ii, 30): "Decet ergo reges et prin-

The essential purpose which mirrors of princes set themselves is to show princes on the one hand that their power finds its only justification in being exercised to good ends—viz. the general advantage of society—and, on the other, that the proper exercise of power is ultimately an effect of wholly virtuous behaviour. A description of this mode of behaviour, that is, of the virtues to be practised and the vices to be shunned, forms the substance of mirrors of princes, which thus hold up to rulers portraits of ideal princes to which it should be their endeavour to conform in both character and behaviour.

The hortatory and abstract character of these works derives from the fact that in the circumstances in which they were produced, princes were of necessity, as Kern has pointed out, irresponsible,²⁰ i.e. not answerable for their actions to those over whom they ruled.²¹ Nevertheless, mirrors of princes clearly attempt to right this evil by insisting that princes must behave as though they were in fact answerable for their actions to some power which could in course of time judge them and reward or punish them according to their deeds.

It is in the classical mirrors of princes²² that the array of virtues—justice, temperance, prudence, moderation, chastity, diligence, courage, piety, affability, wisdom, and so forth—which together in their manifold interrelations determine the actions of a good ruler, first make their appearance as part of general considerations on the question of rule based on experience of political life and reflection on the purpose of human existence.

The wholly secular outlook of these works and their descriptive, discursive nature is what most differentiates them from the mediaeval mirrors. The need for virtuous rule is asserted and the benefits of good rule (loyal subjects; peace, prosperity) are stressed and made to serve as incentives. When, however, the Greco-Roman writers of mirrors of princes attempt to show that these immediate and indeed important benefits are yet not the only ones—that the prince has to bear in mind other more enduring consequences *to himself* of his actions—the lack of a generally accepted concept of some power more permanent, more absolute and all-encompassing than that of the rulers of men makes itself felt. Fame and the good judgment of posterity are the reasons given to stress the necessity for responsible (virtuous) behaviour.

A more coherent *weltanschauung* underlies the mediaeval mirrors of princes,

cipes quos competit esse quasi semideos et esse intellectus sine concupiscentia et esse formam vivendi et regulam agibilium sic se habere ad legem divinam naturalem et humanam ut sicut excedunt alios potentia et dignitate sic eos superent bonitate et virtute."

²⁰ F. Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, translated by S. B. Chrimes, Oxford, 1939.

²¹ Nor indeed was it proper that they should be so, according to the view then prevalent. Alcuin, for instance, advises Charlemagne, "Populus juxta sanctiones divinas ducendus est non sequendus; et ad testimonium personae magis eliguntur honestae.

Nec audiendi qui solent dicere *Vox populi, Vox Dei* cum tumultuositas vulgi semper insaniae proxima sit." (In Stephani Baluzii *Miscellanea*, Tomus Secundum, Lucca, 1761, p. 51, column 1.)

²² Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, *Hiero*, *Agésilas*; Isocrates, *to Demonicus*, *to Nicocles*, *to Philip*; Dio Chrysostom, *Kingship*, 1, 2 and 3, are but a few representative works. The moral side of the question (for the virtuous prince is but the virtuous man in a position of authority) is of course discussed at length by Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Cicero, to name but the most obvious.

which, in their definitive form (in the *De Regimine Principum* of Aegidius Romanus, for instance), are beautifully systematic treatises in which the subject is organized in accordance with the ideas of universal order propounded by Augustine and Gregory the Great.²³ Augustine (*De Civitate Dei*) evolved the following conception: There are four grades in the universal society: the household, the city, the world and the universe. Each is part of the next highest in the scale and ought so to be arranged as both to constitute a harmonious unit in itself, in which everything is in its place, and to fit in with others of its kind to produce a harmonious unity in the grade above itself. So, the city is composed of households which it directs, the world of many cities and the universe englobes the whole and gives it its direction and order. Everywhere in this harmonious concord of parts there is evidence of the guiding hand of God and of His justice "distributing unto everyone his due." And everything is so arranged that it promotes the attainment of the only real happiness (not to be found on earth) in heaven. So, also, the reward and happiness of the good ruler is to be found not on earth but in heaven. And the guarantee of this reward lies in "a good conscience, and the knowledge of having ruled well and wisely in the interests of the people and in accordance with the will of God. . . . Thus everlasting happiness is made possible."²⁴

Why so systematic an exposition is required is made plain by Aquinas (*De Regimine Principum*, Bk. I) who, beginning with the purpose of human existence, shows how every aspect of the state must be so ordered, and these properly inter-connected, that the state may, in the best way possible, fulfil its function of preparing man for eternal life. He shows by analogy with the universe and the body that in the state too there must be a single ruling principle, viz. the king. But the ruling principle can fulfil its task only if it knows the end to which its labours are directed. Hence the necessity for an exposition of the general laws and purposes of Christian statecraft, from which can be deduced the detailed tasks of the Prince.²⁵ A striking simile of Aegidius

²³ The importance of the work of Augustine and Gregory the Great in determining the form of mediaeval mirrors is stressed by J. Roder, *Das Fürstenbild in den mittelalterlichen Fürstenspiegeln auf französischem Boden*, Munster, 1938, p. 16.

²⁴ It is of interest in connection with *Le Prince* to remember some steps in Dante's reasoning whereby he shows (*De Monarchia*, Bk. I) the necessity of a universal monarchy as deriving from the universal scope of God's design for humanity. The basis of everything, he notes, is the goal not of this or that section of the human race, but of the human race as a whole. That goal is salvation to which end speculative wisdom is of the highest importance, being the ultimate and best grade of wisdom. But peace is essential for speculative wisdom. Therefore peace is the best form of human existence. This conclusion becomes the first step in the next "syllogism": Peace

is the best form of human existence. But peace is harmony, and it is under one ruler that there is most harmony in the world. Therefore there must be one ruler who will order the world and make for the best conditions for achieving the true end of society.

²⁵ Thus we find that once the metaphysical foundations have been discussed, Aegidius Romanus, Ptolemy of Lucca and others examine a whole variety of practical questions such as the status of women, the foundation of kingdoms, the various kinds of riches (natural and artificial) necessary for the running of a kingdom, the need for good roads, standard weights and moneys, and similar matters. Even more detailed are works such as Roger Bacon's *Secretum Secretorum* in which the proper hours for eating are set down, the appointing of ministers and counsellors discussed, as also the choice of physicians, secretaries, ambassadors.

Romanus puts the matter in a nutshell: A king is to society as a bowman to the arrow: he pulls and directs it that it may strike the target.

Here, therefore, in contradistinction to the classical mirrors of princes, the prince is accountable to a power greater than himself. What characterizes the mirrors of princes of the mediaeval period is the place of the prince in the cosmic scheme of things in which the central figure remains constantly that of God.²⁶ Nowhere does the prince figure, as it were, *in propria persona*;²⁷ he is God's instrument, His regent on earth. What he has, his place, his virtues, his power, are, to use the expression of Aegidius Romanus, "infused" into him by God's grace. Nor does he, in exercising his power, carry through his own design, but that of God. His superiority, furthermore, is not his as a person, but, from another aspect, only his in so far as he is on earth the most eminent embodiment of Christian perfection. The moment a prince believes anything whatsoever that is good to inhere in himself as it were by nature, he sins and degenerates into a tyrant puffed up with vainglory, false pride,²⁸ and all the sins which flow inevitably from these. He loses what characterizes him as a Prince, his sense of mission²⁹—of having a duty to perform not for his own, but for the general good—and thereby forfeits his position as king. For there is only one legitimate king, properly speaking, and that is a good king. *Rex a recte regendo dicitur*.³⁰

The splendid ideals of the renaissance, its radiant humanism (*Dio vestito di umana carne*) on the one side, and the limited possibilities for their realization

²⁶ In connection with the differences between the classical and mediaeval mirrors of princes, it is interesting to recall the remarks of Lactantius (*Divine Institutes*, VII, vii) concerning pre-Christian philosophers who all had some glimpse of the truth, but who, since each got only a snippet and since they were all sectarian, could do nothing with what they had perceived. "But if there had been any one to collect together the truth which was dispersed amongst individuals and scattered amongst sects, and to reduce it to a body, he assuredly would not disagree with us. But no one is able to do this, unless he has experience and knowledge of the truth . . . for he cannot in any other way reject the things which are false, or choose and approve of those which are true. . . . On account of these most obstinate contentions of theirs, no philosophy existed which made a nearer approach to the truth, for the whole truth has been comprised by these in separate portions. . . . Therefore the philosophers touched upon the whole truth, and every secret of our holy religion; but when others denied it they were unable to defend that which they had found, because the system did not agree with the particulars; nor were they able to reduce to a summary those things which they had per-

ceived to be true . . ."

²⁷ Even tyrants "qui publica iura non ad communem utilitatem sequuntur, sed ad propriam retorquere conantur" (Dante, *De Monarchia*, III, iv), are but God's instrument for punishing the wicked. To be relieved of them, a people "debet a peccatis cessare . . . quod regnare facit hominem hypocritam propter peccata populi. Tollendi est igitur culpa, ut cesset tyrannorum plaga" (Aquinas, *De Regimine Principum*, I, vi).

²⁸ Cf. Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae*, Tomus Secundus, Quaestio VII, De Vitiis Capitalibus, Art. II, 2, "Praeterea, praeferre voluntatem suam voluntati superioris, est superbire; sed quicumque peccat mortaliter praefert voluntatem suam voluntati superioris, scilicet Dei. Ergo superbit. Omne ergo peccatum est superbia. . . ." And cf. II, 3, "Superbia . . . est amor propriae excellentiae. . . ."

²⁹ Aegidius Romanus makes it a condition of good rule that the prince do his duty from choice and with pleasure; in this he follows the ideas put forward by the Christian Fathers.

³⁰ On the origin of this famous sentence see J. Balogh, "Rex a Recte Regendo," *Speculum*, III, 1928, pp. 582-4.

on the other, find their reflection in the differences between the ideal prince and the prince of Machiavelli.

Leaving Machiavelli aside for the time being, the renaissance mirrors are to be distinguished from their mediaeval predecessors by their greater concern with present circumstances,³¹ and by their pervasive Neoplatonism in which, in alliance with the optimistic humanism of the times, the merging of the human and the quasi-divine—the former becoming almost deified—becomes a decisive element in the form of *exempla*.

Exempla had, of course, been used in mediaeval mirrors, though, except in the work of John of Salisbury (himself the product of an earlier "renaissance"), only sparingly.³² The mediaeval view of *exempla* was that they were utterances or deeds of some actual person worthy of imitation.³³

The significance of *exempla* for renaissance writers is very different. Filelfo notes that there are two opinions concerning the nature of Ideas: Plato and other philosophers hold the view that they are incorporeal substances which exist as such in the mind and imagination of God Himself; whereas Zeno and his followers opine that Ideas (in so far as they directly affect men) cannot exist except through the medium of matter to which they give its form, but which is the necessary vehicle for their becoming visible to the eye.

"So [he writes] Juvenal the poet and Antonius the orator, in seeking to produce the idea of poetry and eloquence respectively brought to the task every device of poetry and the dignity and magnificence of oratory. Let us, he proceeds, bring to mind Rome, the two horses made of marble, and near them also the two marble young men, all of a wondrous beauty and extraordinary size, which Praxiteles and Phidias wrought with such noble artistry. They had no models for these most splendid works which they left for the admiration of posterity: reflection and the fire of genius supplied the models. We must suppose the same to be true of Scopas and Polycletus, as well as of those most noble painters Euphranor, Asclepiodorus, Plistenetus, the brother of Phidias, and Apelles when they painted, some Gods, others heroes, battles, victories . . . A notion or conception, you must know, of the kind of which I spoke earlier, which, although it cannot exist independently, inasmuch as it both arises and decays, yet gives form to formless matter, gives shape to an ideal, and so brings it to pass that they have an external manifestation. Nor for all that may we deny that the Idea is something which can be seen by the eye: as might

³¹ Giovanni Bracciolini, *De Officio Principis Liber*, tackles the question of selling votes in Papal elections and inveighs against "avarice" (commercial "morality" and practices); Iason de Nores, *Breve Institutione dell'ottima Repubblica*, writes a sustained praise of Venetian institutions; Platina, *De Optimo Cive*, also takes up the question of avarice. Even in the work of Patrizzi, *De Regno et Regis Institutione Libri IX*, which is in form far more like the work of Aegidius Romanus, the inter-connections between *domus*, *civitas*, *orbis* and *mundus*

have become faint.

³² See the detailed analysis of the work of John of Salisbury by H. Liebeschütz, *Mediaeval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury*, London, 1950.

³³ "Exemplum est dictum vel factum alicuius autentice persone dignum imitatione." The definition is John of Garland's, quoted by E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, transl. W. R. Trask, New York, 1953, p. 60, n. 71.

an artist who had selected a model to which he might refer when working, irrespective of what he is working at.”³⁴

From this one may reasonably conclude that when renaissance writers used illustrious examples of antiquity, whose classical shape had but lately become familiar to them, as *exempla* of virtues and vices, they regarded these as, so to speak, Ideas made flesh. The merciful Julius Caesar, the pious Aeneas, Regulus the soul of good faith, the wrathful Alexander, and a host of other antique figures, culled from works literary and political, each gives striking expression, splendid figuration, to some virtue or vice of whose essentially spiritual nature he is the visible manifestation. Nor is this confined to mirrors of princes; we find the same conception given pictorial representation, as, for instance, in Raphael's 'School of Athens' in which, *inter alia*, Plato and Aristotle symbolize different kinds of wisdom.

The relation between the essentially pictorial nature of this notion and the "triumph" will readily be grasped. One has only to read the most famous of these triumphs, those written by Petrarch, to see that the renaissance mirrors of princes are in some respects also triumphs in which the noble examples of antiquity and the monstrous tyrants pass before one to illustrate the virtues of princes and the vices of tyrants.³⁵

³⁴ F. Filelfo, *De Morali Disciplina*, Venice, 1578, pp. 19-20. "Videmus secundum Platonem, id bonum existimari, quod a prima Idea boni secundum boni formam proficiscitur . . . Fuerint enim nonnulli qui Ideam esse dixerunt substantiam incorpoream; quae quamquam ipsa per sese non existit, format tamen informis materias, causaeque est ut oculis subjiciantur. . . . Plato enim Socratis auditor, imitatorque Pythagorae Samij arbitratus est Ideam esse substantiam a materia separatam quae per sese in ipsius Dei Intelligentia imaginationeque existeret. Et haec sane de Ideis sententiae sunt, quas antiqui nobis philosophi scriptas reliquere . . . Caeterum ut perspicuum reddatur, et quo pacto Socrates ac Plato, et quo pacto caeteri philosophi Ideam acceperunt, duplicem esse mentem intelligamus, necesse est: Alteram Divinam et Humanam alteram. Et humanae quidem mentis ideam ut Zenonij et ij omnes qui putaverunt Ideam esse substantiam incorpoream, quae licet ipsa per sese non existeret, informis tamen materias formaret, et ut eae apparerent exterius esse causae. Voluerunt hi sane huiusmodi Ideam aliud nihil esse, quam nostram cogitationem atque notionem. . . . Et his sane duo Zenonem sequuti, Iuvenalis Poeta Antoniusque orator cogitaverunt speciem quandam et oratoris et poetae excellentem atque perfectum prorsus, ad cuius imitationem poeticae et eloquentiae dignitatem ac magnificentiam retulerunt.

Quod eius rei opifices quoque sequutos arbitramur. Intueri licet vel hac tempestate Romae et equos duos factos marmoreos, et item iuvenes iuxta duos factos e marmore utrosque mirae pulchritudinis, magnitudinisque eximiae; quos Praxiteles et Phidias nobili opificio elaboraverunt. Non enim aut in equis Cillarum atque Arium, aut in invenibus fingendis Herculem aliquem et Iasona ante oculos habuerunt; ad quorum similitudinem, tam praeclara opera posteritati admiranda reliquerent; sed ingenij acrimonia et cogitatione sua pro exemplari sunt usi. Idem existimandum est de Scopae et Polycleto. Idem quoque de nobilissimis illis pictoribus Euphranore, Asclepiodoro, Plisiteneto Phidiae fratre et Apelle cum pingerent, alij Deas, alij heroas, alij pugnas, alij victorias. . . . Huiusmodi autem, de qua loqui coeperam notio atque cogitatio, quamquam per sese non existit, utpote quae et oriatur et occidat; materias tamen informis insignit forma effigieque figurat atque efficit, ut videantur exterius. Nec tamen inficier Ideam quoque aliquid esse quod oculis videri possit: ut si quo sibi exemplar artifex proposuerit ad quod respiciens operetur, quidquid tamen operatur."

³⁵ We cannot, unfortunately, linger to discuss other points such as the pastoral introductions to many of these renaissance mirrors, so evidently modelled on classical examples. An interesting discussion of rhetoric and

It is to be noted furthermore that the ideal Christian prince of the mediaeval mirrors, whom God of His grace has infused with virtue, has undergone, in Renaissance mirrors, a subtle transformation: he is still a Christian prince, yet this no longer appears so crucially important a characteristic when those on whom he is to model himself are pagans.³⁶

This, together with the fact that in the renaissance mirrors of princes the clearly articulated world-view which gave the mediaeval mirrors their particular Christian quality is for the most part not in evidence,³⁷ gives them their different cast. While there is no repudiation, explicit or implicit, of Christianity, the ideal prince of the Renaissance, in conformity with a conception of man which is more optimistic, more humane, more generous, becomes the ideal rather of an expansive humanistic, than of a narrower Christian, conception.³⁸ And in this broader category, the great princes of the classical world, to the extent that they have given proof of great qualities of mind and body, quite naturally find their place.

It is of this perennial ideal which embraces without distinction the best of what was then known of the political history of man, that Machiavelli's *Prince* is the equally all-encompassing realistic counterpart. To the noble theory, he counterposes the sordid practice as he had learnt it through experience, reading and reflection.

For Machiavelli the dominating aspect of the world in which princes actually play their parts is the struggle for power: between individuals, between classes, between nations. For him the world is and has always been³⁹

politics is to be found in an article by D. Cantimori, "Rhetoric and Politics in Italian Humanism," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, I, 1937.

³⁶ Thus Aeneas Sylvius, Pope Pius II, sees nothing paradoxical in giving as a figuration of the perfect king, Augustus Caesar "in modum coelestis regnum" (!) directing the whole world. ("De Ortu et Autoritate Imperij Romani," in *Andreae Alciati . . . De Formula Romani Imperij Libellus*, Basle, n.d., p. 278).

³⁷ The reasons for this are not far to seek. Renaissance Italy was a picture of uneven development, with on the one hand highly developed mercantile centres and considerable manufacturing areas in the North, and, on the other, the South essentially still feudal; split up into numberless contending states, city-states, principalities, experiencing the vicissitudes of ever-changing rule; caught up also in a tremendous revival of culture: here scientific development, there mystical philosophy, and everything tinged with the renewed contact with the wisdom of classical antiquity, including of course Christian teachings and philosophy; yet again, the corruption of the Church which undermined respect for it as a representative of Christian

teachings. In this ferment it comes as no surprise that the well-defined cosmic pattern of things recedes into the background, to be replaced by elements more representative of present interests and preoccupations.

³⁸ It is interesting to observe, in view of Sorel's classification of Balzac's *Le Prince* and *Aristippe*, that the ideal prince and the ideal "gentleman" of the renaissance differ largely only in their spheres of activity; but that their qualities as men are for the most part identical.

³⁹ There is thus for Machiavelli no difference between the Greeks, Romans and his contemporaries. The ancients too were men who tried to realize their political ambitions. They made mistakes and failed, or they sometimes succeeded. And ancient history is the record of this progress and for this reason of inestimable value to him who knows how to read it aright. However, this reading, though valuable, is not in itself sufficient, but must be supplemented by experience and insight into the specific possibilities of each turn of events. The successful prince is one who knows how to adapt the lessons he has learnt in the form of general precepts so that they become adequate particular applications to the situation he is faced with.

an organic interrelation of weak, strong, large, and petty states, the mutual relations of which determine the existence of each one of them. Every state in consequence is forced to adopt the methods current in politics—deceit, fraud, surprise—if only in order to preserve itself against the others. Princes are left with little choice as to how they are to behave in their public, political life; no matter what intentions they have, no matter how noble they may be as individuals in their private capacity, survival dictates their actions as rulers, and willy-nilly, they are forced into the pattern from which none can wholly escape. It is just this essential limitation of practical possibilities that Machiavelli exposes in the sharpest light. Power politics, he proves, is but opportunism reduced to a system; and in so far as in the actual world all politics are power politics, any prince who wishes to secure his rule will be the more successful, the better he has mastered the secrets of opportunistic behaviour, which Machiavelli sets out in *Il Principe* in the most general, and “purest” form.

With this the tradition of the mirrors of princes is brought to an end. New circumstances subsequently produce new political forms, which require analyses for which mirrors of princes are no longer adequate vehicles, even if certain aspects of their content (particularly with respect to character) retain a certain validity. This notwithstanding, mirrors of princes continue, of course, to be written after the sixteenth century; but they bring nothing strikingly new, merely combining in different ways the elements which have here been summarily described.

IV

At first sight, *Le Prince* appears to be but a series of crowded canvases in which an opulent variety of details is brought into connection for no apparent reason and seemingly (if one read but for the adventure) without finally achieving any real coherence. Closer examination reveals however that, while the rapid succession of lavishly pictorial scenes is formally necessary, they are held together by a definite organizing principle which they are intended constantly to illustrate.

About the formal aspect of the work, Balzac is very specific: “It must not be that I alone remain dumb amidst the public acclamation, and become the only useless workman in the preparation for the triumph.”⁴⁰ It is, however,

⁴⁰ All references are to the edition of 1631. On record are some of the triumphs given for Louis XIII which, if Balzac did not see, he must have known about. Of particular interest is the triumph of Avignon (*La Voye de Laict*) in which, in pictorial form, there were given along the road the various requirements that lead to eternal or “real” glory. These were, in this order: “Le Portal de Félicité,” in which virtue, the real essence of Fortune, figured largely; then followed an equestrian statue of Louis XIII, for “les statues sont les premières choses . . . pour resveiller la mémoire des grands héros qu’elles représentent, et

donner la première pointe à leur reputation et à l’estime qu’on doit faire de leur valeur.” The pedestal was full of emblems, while around the ledge ran the inscription, “. . . iustior alter, Nec pietate fuit nec bello maior et armis.” The virtues themselves next lined the route, the virtues, “ces vives couleurs et la vraye image des grands Roys aussi bien que du Dieu vivant qu’ils représentent sur terre . . . et nommément La Sagesse. . . .” So we come now to “Le Trophée de la Sagesse,” next to “La Fontaine de Justice,” then to “Le Théâtre de la Force et de la Piété,” which at last brings us to the “Palais de la Gloire.”

not to be a triumph of the same kind as that found in Renaissance mirrors of princes. In these the great rulers of antiquity had exemplified degrees of virtue which contemporary rulers ought to aspire to manifest, the former standing to the latter as the ideal to the imperfect reality. With this Balzac has nothing to do. "It is no longer necessary," he writes, "to look for the Ideal Prince in the Cyropaedia, nor run to Rome to admire statues of Consuls and Emperors, nor praise the dead to the detriment of the living. There is not one ancient in all this people of stone and bronze who is the equal of our Hero. We possess what our forefathers longed for; nor could we bring to mind anything to equal what we see before our eyes."

In the introduction, modelled on the classic tradition (as, for instance, in *The Republic*), Balzac begins by celebrating the pleasures and advantages of rural life: it is quiet under the benign sky, and he feels he is reborn and takes part in the rebirth of all things. He praises the Charente, "a fountain from

(*La Voye de Laict, ou Le Chemin de Héros au Palais de la Gloire, Ouvert a l'entrée triomphante de Louis XIII, Roy de France et de Navarre en la cité d'Avignon ces 16 Novembre 1622*, Avignon, 1623.) Another triumph, also copiously illustrated and full of comments upon kingship, is the *Discours sur les Arcs triomphaux dressés en la ville d'Aix à l'heureuse arrivé de très-Chrestien, très-Grand et très-Iuste Monarque Louis XIII, Roy de France et de Navarre*, Aix, 1624. The dedication to the King begins as follows: "Sire, Comme les Roys sont les Dieux de la terre aussi leur nom doit estre continuellement adoré par des Festes solempnelles et des sacrifices publics . . ." Your forefathers, we read, have left their sacred tombs to admire with us "les effects de vostre Piété envers Dieu, de vostre Prudence et de vostre Justice envers vos sujets, de vostre Valeur et de vostre clemence envers vos enemis, et advoüer que vous estes le Restaurateur de ce grand et puissant Royaume autant vostre par merite que par naissance, que vous estes le veritable Fondateur du repos public, et l'arbitre irrecusable de toute la Chrestienté." Yet another panegyric entitled *Les Brillante (sic) Vertus du Throsne de Iustice de Louis (le Iuste) XIII du nom Roy de France et de Navarre . . .*, Paris, 1633, opens with the words, "Sire, Les Princes et les Roys qui sont comme des Dieux ombragez et racourcis par la mortalité . . ."

To conclude this question of triumphs, a glance at Henri Estienne's *Triumphes de Louis XIII* will be rewarding. Twenty-four plates depict the major military victories of Louis XIII. Now he is shown punishing the rebels; now Mercy wrests the lightning from his hand, and he pardons whom he might have destroyed; now he is shown as the protector

of the weak (of Mantua, Portugal and Catalonia); again, he is seen receiving the homage of Neptune, the Tritons and Aeolus after the capture of La Rochelle. In all these drawings, full of allegorical symbols and classical references, he appears as Augustus, as the earthly Jupiter with the virtues attendant, now Clemency, now Anger. He tramples Heresy (in the image of Discord with her snaky locks) underfoot, and extends his protection and help to Religion. In all of the plates, there breathes the idea of the King as superhuman ("semideus" as Platina wrote), as the earthly exemplar of God and a model of the royal virtues. The Neoplatonic tinge is clearly discernible here, so that we see that *Le Prince* is, in this respect, far from unique, and in reality rather part of a developing milieu (which these works themselves help to bring into being) in which, owing to complex social conditions, the theory of divine right is developed as the ideological sanction for absolute monarchy. How much, if anything, these works contribute to the establishment of the actual theory is a moot point; yet, whatever answer be given to this question, it remains that they help to prepare consciousness by creating (as a part of fundamental changes in the social body) a climate of opinion in which such ideas (which would have been abhorrent to mediaeval writers for whom, as we saw, the king was a mere agent carrying out the will of God) become accepted as "natural." One is conscious here of the abyss which, in this respect, separates Balzac and the writers of these accounts of Louis XIII's triumphs from Aquinas and the writers of his day.

ts very source right up to the sea where it is still as fresh and pure as at its origin," with its steep banks where, if he cannot pick up shells as Scipio and Laelius were wont to do along the sea's edge, he can nevertheless contemplate the beauties of nature, the sunset, the rolling hills and the endless variety of the prospect.

On the day news was received of the surrender of La Rochelle⁴¹ he was walking along the river reading the *Æneid*, when he espied something yellow and blue playing in the reeds among the poplars on the opposite bank. "As I had just been reading of the sudden appearance of the God of the Tiber to Æneas," he writes, "and my head was full of poetic fancies, I thought at first that this phantom might be the God of our river. But I immediately put this extravagance out of my head and saw distinctly a blond man taking off his blue plush cap to me. From this I concluded that he was in need of charity, and the river being too wide for me to throw him the alms which I intended to give him, I ordered a fisherman to row him across." He was a Flemish gentleman, it transpired, who had come from Spain, and despite his rags one could see that he was well born.

The Flemish gentleman then tells this story:

As he was returning from Loretto he was captured by a Turkish ship and taken to Algiers where he was sold into slavery. He had had four masters, the last of whom had worked him so hard that he had become useless in the end, and his master had been forced to part with him "pour une pistole à un Religieux de la Mercy." The Flemish gentleman then gives a vivid description of the prisons in Algiers, which can rightly be called graves of the living.

"Subsequently [continues Balzac], I questioned him closely about the customs of the Moors, learning a great deal that history had not taught me. But the most pleasing thing I heard, which really made my meeting him worth while, was that upon my having asked him if the Moors were curious about what happened in foreign countries, or whether they, like other barbarians, lived in abysmal ignorance, he replied that in all Africa one heard of nothing but the victories of our King and that La Rochelle had occasioned innumerable bets. So much so that among the slaves, a Frenchman, being angry with a Spaniard who asserted that the King could not possibly bring the matter to a successful conclusion without help from the King of Spain, hit him so hard that he fell dead at his master's feet."

"At first [Balzac proceeds], I could hardly believe this; I found the story too wonderful to think it true. But he swore to me that it was so, and I was delighted to see that in this, the extreme old age of the world, and the decline of everything, France could still produce such children, worthy of their mother's primal vigour. Such an example made me jealous: if miserable slaves, I said to myself, who can scarce breathe under the weight of their chains, so love a Prince who has not delivered them from slavery as to kill the enemies of the Crown equipped with nothing but sheer courage, how can I, living in a Province of which he is more particularly the liberator than of the rest of France, remain indifferent? How can the presence of so glorious an object not stir my idleness? and I

⁴¹ The treaty was signed on October 29th, 1628.

remain asleep nor feel so near and wonderful a light that flows beyond the seas penetrating even into the dungeons of Barbary? One must give more obvious signs of one's appreciation of the public good fortune and one's own good. Our joy must be shown by some act; silent admiration is not enough. It must not be that I alone remain dumb amidst the public acclamation, and become the only useless workman in the preparations for the triumph."⁴²

Balzac, the moment he gets into the work proper—after lamenting the absence of adequate materials, there being no marble quarries, nor gold mines from which he might extract the embellishments he desires—repeatedly stresses the more than human stature of Louis XIII which is both an effect of his pre-eminent qualities as well as a consequence of the Grace of God. "Sometimes," he writes, "there enters into human actions a ray of Divinity which strengthens and perfects them, which infinitely increases virtue and draws the astonishment and admiration of peoples." "Things must arrive to supreme goodness in stages," he further notes, "to that Prince who, in virtue of the superlative excellence of his mind, ought, as Aristotle says, to reign by natural right, did he not, according to the principles of our faith, do so by Divine right."⁴³ But this excellence of mind is, though partly an effect of

⁴² This introduction came under fire at least from two quarters. In the anonymous *Discours sur le livre de Balzac intitulé Le Prince, et sur deux lettres suivantes*, (Paris?), 1631, we read, "Qui eust attendu le recit d'une cruelle mort au commencement d'une louange? Ce qui sembleroit dur, ce qui pourroit faire honneur mesme aux Mahometans, et aux Barbares, sont les delices, et les gentilleses de Balzac" (p. 12). And De Morgues (*Diverses pieces pour la defence de la Reyne Mere du Roy tres Chrestien Louys XIII*, Paris, 1637), an inveterate and intemperate enemy of Richelieu, comments: "Nous avons veu une piece, qui devoit estre tres relevée, et tres serieuse, commencer part une basse et ridicule invention de Roman, par les descriptions des peupliers et des grenouilles des rivages de la Charente, et par le bonnet bleu d'un Flamand qui est le premier personnage de la Comedie, et qui nous fait voir, que l'auteur n'est pas seulement extravagant dans l'election des choses qu'il dict mais encore des acteurs qu'il fait monter sur son theatre."

⁴³ At this point Balzac (who could have got these conceptions either from the texts themselves—Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry or Macrobius—or from Ficino) launches into a digression reviewing Neoplatonic speculations on the separation of the soul from the body by means of which the soul, shedding everything perishable, reaches a state in which it

knows not only distant things, but also what has not yet taken place, such that it not only takes part at the birth and happening of things, but at their conception and planning. Only the seventh of these separations, he asserts, is of moment. For it is due to a complete victory over the bad passions, a perpetual abstention from all forbidden pleasures, an inviolable purity of body and mind. Under these circumstances, it is quite credible, he proceeds, that God, purity itself, takes pleasure in making His home in the heart of the chaste, kindles therein a light which pierces the darkness of the future and hides nothing of His designs from them. This conception is the key to the whole work. Louis XIII is the exemplar of the highest grade of virtue, rightly pertaining to those "qui enim perfecti adeo debent esse" (Aegidius Romanus, *op. cit.*, I, iii, 33). Balzac, however, places this conception in a Christian framework, adding that he believes with Christian philosophers that God has at all times taken particular care to enlighten the chaste and the virtuous, since eternal wisdom finds its home in innocent and pure souls. Further, even this purity and virtue are, in the final analysis, wholly the effect of God's grace; and if Louis XIII labours at his royal duties without cease, it is because of his piety which animates him with a divine frenzy.

study, really more the outcome of spotless virtue and purity of mind, which, rising above material things, sees the essence of all things unblemished and undistorted.

In keeping with the general conception that everything noble derives from the intellect, Balzac repeatedly stresses the incomparable wisdom of the King, which in its operations is likened to the Wisdom of God. Through it, he will strengthen tottering kingdoms, restore their legitimate rulers and maintain their ancient laws. In doing this, he will do no less than those legislators who first assembled wandering peoples, drew the plans of communities and laid the foundations of civil society. We are constantly called upon to witness the peculiar greatness of the King's designs which largely comes from the fact that his counsels are the effects of a superior prudence, inspirations received direct from God rather than suggestions made by men. His judgment is so certain that it is clear he does not see things in the manner of ordinary men, but in the purer light of a superior reason. He discovers the truth without having to seek for it, and the quickest movement of his thought is usually so reasonable and convincing that nothing remains to be added to this first impulse. Naturally, experience has helped to perfect this mind. And in this the King has been singularly fortunate in that, while in the past whole ages passed by without a stir, as though there were a general suspension of all the functions of active life, the last twenty years have been so full of storms, changes and revolutions, civil and domestic quarrels, that nothing that could be imagined either of malice, cruelty or all the ills of society was lacking; it seems that Fortune intended to give him "une experience raccourcie, et de l'enseigner par abbrege."

All this, however, serves him only for further opportunities to show his greatness and virtue which themselves are but the manifestations of his piety. This is no mere show⁴⁴ and has nothing corporeal about it, but comes wholly from the understanding which, being perfectly enlightened, holds only the sanest and most reasonable opinions on the first and excellent Cause about which most men make such rash judgments. Still, the King knows that piety must not remain idle but must animate the heart ("la seconde partie, où naissent les affections et les desirs") that what was light may become fire and so noble a knowledge become fertile in great actions and reveal itself by means of its admirable effects. It is not only at the altar, therefore, that his piety appears in untroubled and safe commerce with God. We must seek it in the battlefield where, at the head of his troops, in the trenches, exposed to the injuries of the weather, he risks the most precious life today on earth. Here he is busy at more than merely the structure and the ornamentation, it is the very foundations of the Church that are made secure whilst at the same time

⁴⁴ He takes as his text, so to speak, the words of Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Job*, I, iii, 3 (Migne, *PL*, LXXV, 530A): "Deum timere est nulla quae facienda sunt bona praeterire." ". . . Il est certain que sans les œuvres la foy n'a pas plus de merite que l'effort violent d'une imagination forte, ou la credulité d'une esprit aysé à persuader: Sans elles la connoissances des Mysteres est une

speculation curieuse dont un Payen peut estre capable; la priere n'est qu'un simple bruit, et les sacrifices ne sont que de meurtres." For this rhetorical amplification he was attacked as we know from his *Deffense in the Dissertations Chrestiennes et Morales* (*Oeuvres*, 1665, II, pp. 286 ff.). In consequence the passage appears in the 1660 edition of *Le Prince* in a somewhat different form.

it is decorated with English flags and filled with innumerable converts who to become good had only to be deprived of the power of doing ill.

What this demonstrates (we paraphrase various passages here) is a profound fear of God which, if it derives from understanding, also flows back into it and directs it. This fear is not cowardice, but strength;⁴⁵ it gives a largeness and nobility to all the King's actions, rouses his anger against the enemies of God and fills him with a courage that is more like a divine fury.

This conception of active piety is another of the decisive elements in *Le Prince*, which is devoted to a graphic description of Louis XIII carrying out his "good works" and fulfilling his duties as viceroy of God on earth. In this way contemporary history is made to be the main content of the work which from this aspect alone can be differentiated from mediaeval and renaissance mirrors. Not only is it the main content; but the respective positions of classical and modern history are to a large extent reversed as has already been mentioned. Where in renaissance and mediaeval mirrors, ancient history represents in many ways a high-water mark of kingly excellence (more so, of course, in the renaissance than in the mediaeval mirrors), from which there has been a manifest degeneration, in Balzac ancient history is, in most cases, a mere preparation for the present day which, crowning its efforts in morals and politics with success at last in the person of Louis XIII, stands to it as a modern realization of what heretofore was only an ideal.⁴⁶

Hence many details become important for filling in this heroic picture, and serve as well to illustrate further virtues in action. Yet this incessant labour of the King's which *Le Prince* presents to us is to be explained not only as the outcome of piety, but also as the effect of hope: hope that after carrying out his duties in an exemplary and tireless fashion, the King shall be deemed worthy of his reward, eternal happiness.

Superficially there is nothing original in this conception which is common to all Christian mirrors. However, there are changes characteristic of the work as a whole. Heretofore, the reward of good rule (be it, in the classical mirrors, fame and the acclamation of posterity or, in mediaeval and renaissance mirrors, eternal felicity in heaven) was something that beckoned from afar.

How different with Balzac! Louis XIII, despite his mortality, is already to a great extent assimilated to the divine essence. He is so near the source of all greatness that, notwithstanding that it might seem that there were nothing greater than royalty, he must nevertheless come down from a higher sphere and lower himself whenever he wishes to sit on the throne of his Fathers and communicate with men. "In truth, his purity is such that," writes Balzac, "without attributing too much to the power of man and the help of Grace,

⁴⁵ Plato calls this fear of things that ought to be feared "modesty" (*Laws*, 647AB). Christian thought is more specific; cf. Smaragdus of St. Michiel, *Via Regia* (Migne, *PL*, CII, col. 941D): "Si ergo timor Dei initium est sapientiae et plenitudo ejus et corona ejus radixque ejusdem, liquido appareat . . . etc."

⁴⁶ Balzac here follows the panegyric tradi-

tion (for a discussion of which see E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 154-182). A detailed study of *Le Prince* as an example of epideictic oratory might well be rewarding, revealing the extent to which Balzac follows the precepts of antique rhetoric, and uses the topics prescribed therein.

I think I can say that he has up to now kept entire the innocence with which he came into the world. Consequently there is in the world nothing he can deem worthy of his pains; everything therein is too paltry for his consideration. He looks upon the world as one would from heaven; only the possession of God can fill so large a heart. And, to put the matter briefly, this is his ambition and desire, 'sa part et son heritage', to which the people and states he governs are nothing but accessories."

From the position put forward by Balzac, it follows that Louis XIII cannot be a tyrant, that all his actions are directed to the common good and that his successes are only what is due to so consummate a virtue. It is precisely his utter lack of interest in earthly things that is the guarantee of his good rule and provides the ground for his (disinterested) concern for all who languish in oppression and misery.⁴⁷ At the same time it can be said, as it were, *a priori*, that he will keep his word and act in every instance with unquestionable probity, prudence and justice.

These general considerations having been set down, we are now in a position to review the work more closely. *Le Prince* begins (appropriately enough, since, as we shall see, it is from one aspect the record of the triumph of true religion over heresy and hypocrisy) with Louis XIII's victory over the rebellious Huguenots, the surrender of La Rochelle. Balzac in writing about the campaign does not spare the Protestants. "Meschans," he calls them—a mad dog that has no hiding-place left and, exposed, has become the laughing-stock of the nation; now it can only defend itself from conviction alone, its teeth and claws having been torn off.

"With their defeat everything which could give rise to trouble has been rooted out. The state, heretofore divided, will now unite in obedience to a single king and will be no more difficult to rule than a well-run household. Who is left who would join these authors of their own fate, who are still wet and dripping from their shipwreck? Nothing is strong enough to resist the King; nothing so great that it does not humble itself before him; nor any subtlety proof against his prudence. Soon neither punishments nor tortures will be necessary in the kingdom. The state will maintain itself through the reputation of the Prince, while he will be feared because of his authority alone. Everyone will surrender who is yet under arms, not waiting until necessity compels him but preferring rather to trust to his word that cannot be broken, than to a fortress which can be captured."

The idea of "authority" runs through *Le Prince*, and is indeed a feature of all mirrors of princes. Power and authority are distinguished in that the latter is rooted in moral excellence and infinitely the stronger of the two.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ One remembers in connection with this conception, Plato, *Republic* 520D, ". . . the truth is that the city in which those who are to rule are least eager to hold office must needs be best administered and most free from dissension, and the state that gets the contrary type of ruler will be the opposite of this."

⁴⁸ Balzac goes into this at length in the *Dissertations Politiques*, I, *Le Romain* (*Oeuvres*, 1665, II, pp. 425-6). "Authority" is inherent in the person who has it, distinct and separate from that given by the State and confirmed by the Senate, of which one reads in parchment letters patent, and which is characterized by its Eagles and Dragons, by the fasces,

From authority comes the power to win affection and the willing obedience of subjects; for, since it is virtuous through and through, its operations call forth from the people love and esteem, which are the hall-marks and indispensable attributes of good rule. Balzac makes it plain that the "King has won us by his merit. Thereby he has won the hearts of all his subjects, the seat of all real attachments."

With Balzac, however, a new twist is given to the conception because it enters into a political controversy as a justification for the centralization of power being carried through under Louis XIII. "History has made it plain," he writes, "that for the *grands* (to speak for the present only of them) religion was but a cloak beneath which they struggled to retain or increase their power and prerogatives." In an apologetic work, such as *Le Prince*, the ethico-religious element naturally quite obliterates the real clash of material interests and becomes the main vehicle for the propagation of the idea that the breaking of all opposition to the state is the inevitable consequence of the moral power of the King alone. Hence the insistence on the "peacefulness" (!) of the transformation, the willingness of its victims to accept it joyfully, and the love they bear the king for the adroit and charitable manner in which he has wielded sword and fire, all these being effects of "authority." To emphasize the point Balzac transforms the king into "the living law": He did neither more nor less than does the law which orders punishments and executions without getting angry, though it be hard and inflexible. "Of what," continues Balzac, "has the King deprived the rebels? Of their party, fortresses and so forth? In this he has done them a service, for not only did they have no right or title to them, but in losing what never belonged to them they have been relieved of worries, anxieties and troubles, and have now the opportunity of attending to their private affairs. This was not an injury, but a service; a measure dictated not by anger, or ill will, but simply the conclusion drawn from all the principles of prudence and the only remedy that would put them on a sounder footing."

Here, to digress for a moment, we strike another new note, the distinction between public and private. "Under feudalism," writes J. N. Figgis, "there is no public law; all rights are private, including that of the king . . . public powers were assimilated to private rights, and . . . government was a matter of bargain. . . ." ⁴⁹ However, the establishment of such a difference is inseparable from the growth of political centralization which progressively engrosses, the more complete it becomes, all previous particular rights—of communes, towns, estates, professions, guilds—standardizes these into a uniform code

the axe and arrows. Authority is "une certaine lumière de gloire, et un certain caractère de Grandeur que la Vertu Heroïque imprime sur le visage des Hommes." Indubitably it is more noble than power, something heavy and material which drags after itself "un long équipage de moyens humains sans lesquels elle demeurerait immobile." In order to move, a thousand wheels and springs are required, and it needs an effort to make one step forward. Authority, on the contrary,

"qui tient de la noblesse de son origine, et de la vertu des choses divines, opère ses miracles en repos." It needs neither instruments nor materials nor even time to operate, is entirely contained in the person of him who wields it, needing neither help nor accessories. "Elle est forte, toute nue, et toute seule: Elle combat estant désarmée."

⁴⁹ J. N. Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius 1414-1625*, Cambridge, 1916, pp. 12-14.

which (at least formally) applies equally to all, irrespective of rank, occupation and other differences. This, of course, is a long drawn out process, reflecting and aiding the extension of the production and distribution of commodities to the point at which the entire social system is transformed, a process of which Balzac witnessed only the first beginnings. He is still, consequently, very unclear about the exact nature of that distinction (which is in any case not fixed, but alters from age to age, and country to country, a part of a whole complex of social changes); and though it appears to him evident that many things must necessarily be taken out of private jurisdiction if peace is to be brought about and maintained, he is yet not clear about what these are, and swings over at times to the other extreme of leaving in effect very little private "right." The whole subject is discussed at length in a review of the respective merits and functions of justice and prudence.⁵⁰

Justice, he notes, can be so scrupulous and exact that she will not act until a crime has been committed, and it is too late; sometimes she "would rather, waiting until the rebels have ruined the state before she feels action to be legitimate, observe the law exactly even if it seems that the law itself perishes in consequence." "This justice," he continues, "is nothing but injustice; and it would be irrational if, in this instance, the forms were not set aside." He then introduces a conception familiar to the Middle Ages—that if the virtues are not complementary and supplementary to one another, they would all be defective—to prove that Justice must have her scruples removed by Prudence, and be forced to strike while yet there is time. Prudence runs where Justice is too slow and prevents what it would be impossible to punish. Justice concerns itself with men's actions; Prudence has rights over their thoughts and secrets. She looks into the future and cares for the general interest.⁵¹ And to

⁵⁰ We may note here: The discussion of these virtues is quite unlike the discussions to be found either in the mediaeval or the renaissance mirrors; but much more like those found in Machiavelli. Even here, however, there is no complete parallel; since for Balzac it is not a matter of giving an appearance of virtue, but of correcting excesses and deficiencies by bringing counterbalancing "moral" forces into play. Practical politics therefore retains its "moral essence," and it is merely a question in each case of "how much" of this or that virtue will combine with a determinate quantity of another in order to achieve the necessary practical result. Nevertheless, in accord with Machiavelli, the correctness of the action (its, so to speak, moral classification) depends in the last resort on the purpose with which it was undertaken. For instance, Balzac writes, "il fait de petites guerres pour esviter des grandes. Il a peut-estre diminué la France de deux ou trois testes, dont le repos public avoit besoin pour son affermisement . . ." Again, ". . . il me semble qu'il est fort raisonnable d'aller au

devant de certaine fautes, qui ne peuvent pas estre punies quand elles sont faites, et de n'attendre pas à corriger le mal, lorsque les Criminels sont devenus les maistres de leurs Iuges." At least in this connection Balzac had assuredly learnt from Machiavelli something of the art of power politics. He needed no practical experience to see the force of these "common sense" injunctions. So far were these sections of the work from being mere "rhetorical amplifications" that he was at once attacked for putting forward such "pernicious Machiavellian precepts." Taking the attacks in conjunction with these passages, we can see that it is Balzac who, contrary to general opinion held today, to some degree understands, while his critics have little notion of, political necessities.

⁵¹ This appears to be derived from Seneca, *De Ira*, I, xix, 7: ". . . in utroque non praeterita, sed futura intuebitur, nam ut Plato ait, nemo prudens punit, quia peccatum est, sed ne peccatur. Revocari enim praeterita non possunt, futura prohibentur."

do this she is forced on occasions to use means which the laws do not enjoin but which necessity justifies, and which would not be wholly good, were they not related to a good end. Kings may prevent a danger, even by the death of those whom they suspect; and such severity is excusable.⁵²

"It is an even greater and more praiseworthy kindness, of which only kings are capable, to do this without causing anyone's death.⁵³ Why shall the Prince not take measures against rebellious subjects upon a slight suspicion or some passing mistrust? Is it not better to make it impossible for the innocent to err than to be reduced to the necessity of condemning the guilty? In doing this is one not being merciful? Is it not, for the most part, 'conserver des gens qui se veulent perdre'? Had things always happened thus, the liberty of a private citizen would not so often have caused the ruin of a kingdom.⁵⁴ If the authors of discords had been apprehended

⁵² See, here again, Seneca, *ibid.*, I, xix, 2: "Hoc non facit ratio; sed si ita opus est, silens quitaque totas domus funditus tollit, et familias rei publicas pestilente cum coniugibus ac liberis perdit, tecta ipsa diruit et solo exaequat et inimica libertati nomina extirpat." See also Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, I, xvi: "E volendo rimediare a questi inconvenienti, e a questi disordini che le supracritte difficoltà si arrecherebbono seco, non ci è piu potente remedio, nè piu valido, nè piu sano, nè piu necessario, che ammazzare i figliuoli di Bruto; . . . e chi prende a governare una moltitudine, o per via di libertà, o per via di principato, e non si assicura di coloro che a quell'ordine nuovo sono inimici, fa uno stato di poco vita."

⁵³ See here Seneca, *De Clementia*, I, v, 6-7: ". . . at si dat vitam, si dat dignitatem periclitantibus et meritis amittere, facit quod nulli nisi rerum potenti licet."

⁵⁴ De Morgues, *op. cit.*, comments on this: "Voilà une leçon pour un tyran: voilà ce que le Cardinal (Richelieu) pratique, et que le Roy n'entend pas." "On invente des crimes," he writes, "pour le porter à consentir à l'emprisonnement ou l'exil de quelqu'un duquel le Cardinal a eu un *leger soupçon*; ou qui a esté si malheureux, que son espece s'est présentée horrible à son imagination dans un de ces espouvantables songes qui luy sont assez ordinaires. Sur ces apprehensions, ou malicieuses ou foles, on oste la liberté à ceux qui pourissent dans les prisons, qui laissent des familles desolées, qui sont deshonnorez comme criminels, et qui voyent leurs biens emportez, divisez, dissipez." Again, "Par cette doctrine tu approuves les massacres, qu'il semble que tu detestes en un autre endroit; ayant trouvé à redire à ce qui arriva sous Charles IX qui

devroit estre iuste, si ton sentiment estoit loy." (Balzac had made a reference to the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.) "Nous n'advouërons point, que le Prince de Balzac aye été tiré sur l'original du Roy, nous serions tres-marris que sa Maïesté fust formée sur le modele de cet ouvrier, qui nous a voulu faire un Roy à la mode du Cardinal de Richelieu." The anonymous writer quoted above also has something to say in this connection. "N'attendons pas de celuy, qui estime si peu la vie des hommes, qu'il traite plus favorablement ce que chacun a de plus cher apres sa vie, c'est la liberté." He writes a few pages after this, "Pour mettre un Prince et un Estat en repos, il est necessaire que le Prince ait acquis entre les siens un creance bien éloignée de celle, que lui apporteroient les beaux conseils de Balzac. Il doit principalement avoir la reputation de Iustice, qui preside en toutes ses actions, qui l'empesche de punir sans cognoistre, de tuer sur un soupçon, d'emprisonner sur une legere deffiance ou sur un songe. Ceste opinion d'un Prince luy gagne les Cœurs des peuples, et asseurant tous ses subiets affermit son throsne, et vaut mieux pour sa vie, que toutes les gardes qui veillent à sa porte." Balzac had already been taken to task for opinions similar to those he expressed in *Le Prince*, written in a letter to the Duc D'Espèron at the time he was in his service (November 18th, 1623). Goulou, *Lettres de Phylarque a Ariste* (Premiere/Seconde Partie, 3me Edition, Nancy, 1626, I, 172), had written: "Il est si estourdi, qu'il insinue dans l'esprit des Princes des maximes qui sont capable de rendre leur iuste puissance odieuse et tyrannique en abusant de leur pouvoir à la ruïne de leur sujets . . . Car comme un autre Machiavel il enseigne au Roy à ne point

in time, apart from the fact that it would have been they who, in the first instance, would have been saved, how many other lives would have been spared, and all the blood that was shed during the civil war. If kings had had enough prudence, there would have been no need of justice."⁵⁵

The relation between prudence and justice in politics is thus the reverse of that generally accepted. Lactantius and Augustine had both made justice the essence of political life; and nowhere does one come across a decisive break with this idea until Machiavelli. This is not accidental. The moment power politics is seen for what it is, prudence and its related "virtues"—seizing the psychological moment, secrecy, diligence, patience (waiting upon the maturity of circumstances), perseverance, fearlessness, and so forth—come into their own as the decisive mark of greatness. To be sure, the mediaeval and renaissance mirrors do not neglect these qualities, but limit the scope of their operations to what, within the ethico-religious framework, is their proper sphere: that is, war. Two things combine to destroy this limitation. The first is the theoretical recognition (limited to Machiavelli, where it is decisive—in Balzac it is only fitful) that power in the hands of a minority is, in every instance, ultimately a form of war, a constant struggle against a variety of external and internal enemies, a struggle now open, now concealed, but, despite all variations, ceaseless. The second, which both Machiavelli and Balzac share, is simply a question of historical experience. Again the difference between the two writers is that the former pursues this experience to its bitter end, whereas the latter largely restricts it to recent French history. Balzac in consequence contradicts the position here outlined the moment he begins dealing with international affairs. Here it is not Prudence but Justice which regulates the actions of Louis XIII, and he falls once more into the traditional pattern of the just prince. It will become clearer as we discuss *Le Prince* as propaganda for a French hegemony of Europe, that to have extended the sway of Prudence into international affairs would have made it impossible for Balzac to put forward this idea.

Prudence, it is clear, is a pre-eminently "Machiavellian" quality the moment it usurps the function of Justice, for, under the cloak of such excuses as "necessity compels" or "expediency justifies", there is nothing a King may not do who takes the prudential virtues as his guide to the exclusion of all

garder sa parole donnée à ses sujets. . . . Maxime tres-pernicieuse, qui apprend aux Roys à ne garder pas leur parole, et d'en faire comme d'un piège pour attraper et surprendre leurs subiects alors que moins ils y pensent, et qu'ils s'endorment et se reposent sur la foy de leur Prince. Ce qui n'est pas moins dangereux que la leçon que fait encore ce nouveau Machiaveliste, quand il dit, qu'il n'y a rien de si aisé à un grand Prince, que de trouver ou de faire des coupables. Où en sommes nous, Ariste, s'il arrive que Narcisse (Balzac) en l'institution de son Prince, qu'il nous promet il y a si longtemps, et dont il a fait desjà voler quelques cayers par la Cour,

continue à luy donner de semblables enseignemens? Qui sera le subiect qui se puisse reposer et vivre en seureté? sur la seule satisfaction qu'il aura de sa bonne conscience, puis qu'il sera loysible à son Prince, de le faire coupable s'il le veut. . . ."

⁵⁵ Elsewhere he writes, "L'Utilité publique ne se fait-elle pas souvent du dommage des Particuliers? Le vent du Nort (*sic*) ne purge-t-il l'air, en deracinant des arbres, et en abbatant des maisons? Ne rachete-t-on pas la vie par l'abstinence, par la douleur, par la perte mesme de quelque partie, qu'on donne volontiers pour sauver le Tout?"

others. This I think is the interpretation of the critics of Balzac. Of course, their point of view is rooted in the institutions and ideology of pre-absolutist times, and in their criticisms one can see the vanishing past angry at the change that is overtaking society. The "justice" they support is the old order of things, in which the power of kings was checked to a greater or lesser extent by that of their feudatories, and by the prerogatives of towns, guilds, courts, and other mediaeval institutions. Everyone who supports their disappearance and the greater scope of royal power is *ipso facto* "machievellian."

To return now to Louis XIII's victories over the Protestants. Having defeated them, what then? Of necessity, since, according to Balzac, no material interests are in question, there is no reason for vindictiveness. "Some, it is true," Balzac explains, "must be punished to serve as examples, but for the most part, the victory serves as a stage upon which the greatness of the King's mercy may be fittingly displayed to the world, for, having brought low the pride of the rebels, he does not insist on adding to the misfortunes of the afflicted. This, it must be understood, is not an effect of weakness, but of choice. The King is not bound by the rules of vulgar politics; his power is such that he is able to change and soften these at will."

There is, on the question of mercy, a great difference between classical and later mirrors. In the first place, mercy as a virtue (though always an important aspect of a ruler's character) is not given an exceptional place in the hierarchy of royal virtues until the time of Seneca. Secondly, though Seneca indeed speaks of mercy as that quality which makes a ruler "divine," it is rather by way of metaphor, the gods of the ancient world not being conspicuous for that quality. Christianity takes over this pre-eminent status of mercy and anchors it in the conception of God as essentially "merciful." A king, consequently, who is the image of God on earth, has, amongst other virtues, to show his clemency to a superlative degree. But the king's position, exalted as it is, carries in Christian thought definite limitations, especially in relation to power. When the king punishes, it is as God's instrument. It is not for him as a man to arrogate this to himself as his prerogative. On the contrary, as a man, his special duty is to imitate the mildness, justice, in general, the goodness of God. "There is nothing more wonderful on earth than the progress the King is making in his design to follow God. For, in truth," writes Balzac,

"it is not by imitating Thunder, nor by holding a trident in one hand and the Earth in the other, nor in ordering that they be called Eternal, that princes follow God; but in governing wisely, delivering the weak from the oppression of the strong, and doing good to everyone. The power of God is not to be copied by men; but it is His goodness and justice⁵⁶ of which we can discern some shadowy features and which the King possesses

⁵⁶ It is interesting to recall the words of Castiglione, whose *Cortegiano* Balzac must surely have read. "... Dio sì diletta ed è protettor di que' Principi che vogliono imitarlo non col mostrare gran potenza e farsi adorari degli uomini; ma di quelli che oltre a la

potenza, per la quale possono, si sforzano di farsegli simili ancora con la bontà, e sapienza..." (The edition is that in *Opere*, 1713 p. 207.) Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae* Quaestio XII, "de Ira," i, 14, expresses a similar point of view.

in such measure that it would be easier to get the Sun to move along a different path than to turn him away from honesty."

Balzac is fully in the Christian tradition in stressing that it is not necessity which compels the King to spare his enemies by reason either of genuine or counterfeited fear; if it were so it would not be a virtuous act which is essentially characterized by its being the result of choice. Compulsion and virtue are, strictly speaking, mutually exclusive. But the virtuous act is further defined by being its own end or having as its end something entirely consonant with it and in itself also virtuous, such as, in the case in point, the pacification of a state. On the other hand, it is precisely the mark of weakness and tyranny (inseparable from which is flattery) to transform actions into the opposite of virtue (though retaining its appearance) in the former case by compulsion, in the latter through having an aim entirely immoral, such as, for instance, avarice (greed for riches), lust for power or something equally bad.

Between Louis XIII and most other kings, contemporary as well as those of previous ages, there is to Balzac a clear and unquestionable distinction: all these were to a greater or lesser extent weak and tyrannical, only he is kingly to the very marrow.

"As for myself, I can find no man over whom the King has not some advantage, nor a life which as a whole is as admirable as his. Wherever I look, great vices accompany great virtues; snakes lie hidden beneath the flowers. All nature is a mixture of good and bad, and there is nothing which has not some disadvantage and weakness. Only in the person of the King do I see nothing which I could wish were not there. There is no necessity to separate the pure from the impure, for everything is equally good, blameless and praiseworthy."

At every point Balzac draws comparisons, and through all of them there runs a condemnation of flattery "which raises up whatever ought to be cast down, attributes majesty to kings who would have difficulty in finding their kingdoms on a map, blesses unjust dominion, prays for the prosperity of the wicked, builds temples to those who are not worthy of a tombstone. . . ." Flattery enters again and again into the question of the king's knowledge. Balzac, in common with many classical writers, holds the position that the principal knowledge of Kings must have kingship for its object.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The King does not spend his time tinkering with a clock or playing chess. As for games of chance, wrestling, racing and the theatre, he does not mind them as pleasures, but would not have them be the actions of a Prince, being ashamed to be praised for things the Romans disdained to teach their children and left to their slaves. He is not like those princes who, leaving much to be desired as rulers, attempt to amaze posterity by trumpeting their achievements in oratory or poetry, or who spend their time painting. It

is not that he is ignorant of these; he lends them his eyes and ears more in order not to seem to condemn them by his absence for he is not opposed to "la politesse . . . et (les) . . . inventions innocentes" which soften the cares of life. On the contrary, he sees into the very secret beauties and graces of the arts, which to many are hidden, into all that is most spiritual and separated from the rest, having nothing material in itself. (That history tells a quite different tale of the achievements and capabilities of Louis XIII is irrelevant since

In truth, Balzac writes, the king understands the science under whose protection all others flourish and upon which society itself rests: the science of government. He has no desire to compete with his subjects and the writers of his day; but rather to compete in courage and justice with his ancestors and all antiquity. The knowledge of kings must be a practical philosophy, must leave the shade of the groves to show itself in the great world, all covered with sweat and dust. It must eschew all vain knowledge which makes its possessor neither better nor happier than before. It must acquire the active virtues that the world demands, and bring about the happiness of the state, not merely the contentment of the mind.⁵⁸

such rhetorical flourishes as this are essential in the work Balzac is writing. See, however, Vauquelin des Yvetaux, *Institution du Prince in Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. G. Mongrédien, Paris, 1921, pp. 166, 173-7; and M. le Vassor, *Histoire du Règne de Louis XIII*, 10 Tom., Amsterdam, 1701-1711, I, v, pp. 607-10.)

⁵⁸ At this point Balzac introduces a long digression on useful and useless knowledge which once more demonstrates his tendency to exalt the state at the expense of everything else. In essence the passages on this question are an attack on "pure" knowledge which yields no immediate practical benefit to society. Included in this are dialectic and rhetoric, mathematical puzzles such as the squaring of the circle, perpetual motion. Those who spend their lives on such pursuits are "fort mal propres à la vie civile. Tant s'en fait qu'il fussent de bons Princes, qu'ils ne seroient pas seulement de Tolérables Sujets. Ce sont des membres à retrancher de la commune société: Ce sont des superfluités de la République, et pour user des termes d'un ancien Grec, ils ne valent rien qu'à peupler les deserts et les solitudes." This diatribe, though for the most part irrelevant to the subject of the work, is nevertheless an important aspect of Balzac's outlook on society. It is not only in *Le Prince* that he inveighs against the "études stériles, et de nul usage, qui exigent une violente attention, et une assiduité servile"; it is part of his attack against the Schools, and has considerable justification and point. Connected with this is his attempt to remove from language all traces of the vocabulary of scholastic disputation. As well, it is an attack on the new way of life that was supplanting the traditional *mores* of the nobility of the kingdom. (In this again one can see the contradictory aspects of Balzac's thought: he desires centralization; but at the same time he wishes every noble to remain a "Cid"! "Assurement," he writes, "il n'y a point de meilleur moyen d'amollir

la vigueur des courages, que d'occuper les esprits à des exercices paisibles et sédentaires, et l'oisiveté ne peut entrer . . . par une plus subtile, ny plus dangereuse tromperie que celle des lettres. Ce sont des personnes oisives et paresseuses, qui ont en partie ruiné le commerce, et l'agriculture; qui sont cause de la faiblesse de nostre Estat, et de la lascheté de nostre Siècle. Et si dans un grand Royaume on ne peut aujourd'hui lever que de petites armées . . . C'est que la plupart de ceux, dont on composeroit ces puissantes et formidables armées, embrassent une profession contraire à celle des armes, et qu'il y a grand peuple inutile, qui consomme toute sa colère en procès, et ne se sert de ses mains qu'à faire des Ecritures et des Livres. Quand toute une Nation est malade de Dialectique ou de la Poesie, et qu'en pays on trafique plus de Spheres et d'Astrolabes, que des autres choses nécessaires, c'est un signe très-asseuré de sa prochaine ruine . . ." Having thrown aside all this "useless" rubbish, Balzac then considers what is useful. In the first place, arms and fighting. (His attitude to *Le Cid* is revealing; this swan song of the "point d'honneur," duelling and heroic martial virtues—all useful knowledge according to his classification—has, he opines, triumphed despite all the animadversions of Richelieu and the inspired censures of the Academy.) In general, he says, those parts of wisdom which rule man in so far as he is a rational animal, and lead him as a social one; the first having virtue and the good of one man as its end, the second public happiness and welfare. To which, he considers, Kings and "les Grands" can add a knowledge of history which teaches them, it being a continuous repetition of essentially similar situations, to act correctly, to recognize developments, to prognosticate accurately, and is, in short, a rational means of controlling events about which neither auspices nor auguries can tell one anything. In short, useful knowledge is practical know-

The conclusion to be drawn from this is obvious: a king who really concerns himself with ruling and the things connected with it has no need of flatterers to praise him for deep acquaintance with subjects which are merely the frills and ornaments of civil life; more, he despises such flatterers whose praise is always the effect either of fear or of hope of gain.⁵⁹ It is in reality tyrants who not only need flatterers to disguise the real content of their actions from their neighbours and posterity; but whose very behaviour makes it impossible for there to be anything other than flattery about them. Hypocrisy is the hall-mark of tyranny and flattery is nothing but systematic hypocrisy.

It has already been shown that, in this connection, Balzac takes over an idea common to mediaeval and renaissance writers. The discussion of tyranny is, in *Le Prince*, introduced by means of a consideration of real and false piety. Of the former we have already spoken: real piety is active engagement in good works which demonstrates before the world, without unnecessary shows or ostentation, the prince's love and fear of God. False piety is the exact opposite, a mere pretence under cover of which vice pursues its objectives.

In reality the distinction is no more than a means for bringing into the work a long and violent attack on Spain and the pretensions of the Spanish crown. At the same time, however, Balzac does not neglect the opportunity to hit out at the "exaltés" in religion, "that trembling, perpetually fearful piety, which believes that God does nothing but prepare for it punishment and tortures . . . out of hatred alone." Then there is the piety of those "who find it easy enough to give an appearance of praying, which consists in simply moving the lips, or of solace by looking dewy-eyed after having first pretended to be sad." "Still," he continues, "these are but innocent extravagances. It is when the appearance of religious feeling masks ambitious designs that it becomes dangerous." "Do not," he warns, "believe this false humility . . . the piety of such people touches up their hair and corrects their gestures; but their passions and vices lie untouched beneath. Their zeal, which according to the intention of the Holy Ghost ought to devour them, devours instead their next of kin, and burns towns and provinces. Their contempt for holy things is such that one is forced to believe that they go to church not to ask pardon for their sins, but to get permission to commit them and sin by authority. . . .

ledge, and has as its object the strengthening of the state and its authority.

The discussion of useful and useless knowledge belongs of course to the debate on the respective merits of the active and contemplative life, for which see, *inter alia*, Cantimori, article cited, and F. A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, London, 1947, pp. 6-7, and especially p. 109 for a summary of Ronsard's views. In the debates in which he took part, "(his) is the only speech which prefers the active to the contemplative life."

Balzac, however, adds a new note in that in his discussion of the matter, it is the necessity for order in society which determines

what knowledge is to be classified as useful and what as useless. It is no longer a question of the best life, i.e. a moral question, but simply a practical one.

⁵⁹ Cf. here a very similar passage in Poggio, *De Infelicitate Principum*, p. 13: "Most princes are not virtuous," he writes. "Eluxit aliquando, sed tamen perraro, in aliquibus quidem virtutum splendor, sed scriptorum nonnullorum assentatio, qui adulationis praemia à Principibus expectabant, ex parvulla scintilla virtutis maximum incendium excitarunt, ampliantes ea verbis, quae tenuia rebus erant." In Machiavelli's dedication of the *Discorsi* to Buondelmonti and Rucellai, similar ideas are put forward.

They imagine every wickedness permissible if only they preserve some appearance of piety."

"Most of *les grands*," he continues dryly, "have in all ages manifested this fine piety, and though it is a well-worn mask, and seen through by everybody, it is not for that any less useful, and continues to deceive the common people. These people mix God into all their ambition. Do they usurp a kingdom over which they have no right . . . they say it is to prevent the enemies of the Church from getting hold of it, or to prevent an evil that possibly may never happen."

At this point Balzac instances lust for gold which led Spain to overrun Peru and Mexico on the pretence of saving souls. This is but the first of many passages in which Balzac accuses Spain of boundless and unlawful ambition.

"Italy bleeds from her many wounds," he writes elsewhere, "and is covered with blows; Germany is no longer free but groaning in her shackles. . . . He flatters in order the better to hurt and his caresses when they do not kill, strangle, soil and corrupt. Genoa and Lucca continue to give an appearance of independence; yet no one will say that their liberty is not stained by marks of servitude. Everywhere he gains his ends by bribery and corruption, even in countries where he has not one single legitimate subject. He wishes either to own or to destroy, and across the Alps and the Rhine there is not a single prince whom either his hatred or friendship does not oppress. And to make all this palatable he drags out old oracles which once foretold that the Lord of the Earth would come from Spain.⁶⁰ His wars are waged neither for the honour of victory nor for the recovery of some past possession; but in the hope of booty and unjust possession. Peace is part of his stratagem, for no sooner does he declare it than he resorts to intrigue and ambiguous words, meaningless promises, vows meant to be broken, false treaties and disloyal friendships. He nurtures all evils, the knives which have committed parricides, the gold which fed the League and even now gives the Huguenots, otherwise a dead body, some semblance of life. All this, he insists, is done *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, and desires that his cruelties should be approved as having the general good in view. Still everybody knows that he has injured the Church, and is aware of his treachery towards it and actual hostility 'jusques dans le sanctuaire.' His negligence caused the revolt of the Netherlands and the mistakes of Luther. But, to disabuse all who fear to call things by their right names lest they be deemed rash, is it not a fact that at the very moment that he was ordering processions in Spain in praise of that Holy Church, he was entering Rome with a Lutheran army, taking Pope Clement prisoner and exposing to the avarice and mockery of heretics the pomp and magnificence of the 'Espouse de Dieu'?"

⁶⁰ In the margin Balzac gives the sources as Claudian and Suetonius. The passages referred to are, respectively, *Carminum Minorum Corpusculum*, xxx, Laus Serenae, 11, 50 ff.

in praise of Spain, and *De. Vit. Caes.*, VII (Galba), ix, 2: "Quorum carminum sententia erat oriturum quandoque ex Hispania principum dominumque rerum."

Continuing this composite portrait of Spanish tyranny in which he brings together events that took place in different reigns, Balzac goes on:

“Before the world he is full of specious pretexts, and his clothes are thickly sewn with painted crosses and the name of Jesus; but it is only a part he is playing. In the assemblies nothing is heard but of salvation of souls and public welfare. This he scorns in private and whispers into the ear of his favourites: ‘Everything must be related to oneself; to rise one must be allowed to trample over the body of one’s own father; the true is in itself no better than the false; we must judge of their value by the profit we get from them; a good conscience is most inconvenient to one who has great designs; the advantages of religion are for Princes, the scruples for their subjects; virtue can sometimes be harmful; but the appearance of virtue is always necessary; injustice in truth has an odious name; but the unjust are not harmed thereby; while on the contrary, probity is satisfied with praise, and while it profits him who has none, is useless to him who has.’ ”

The portrait of Spanish tyranny brings out quite clearly the fact that the content of the traditional mirror of princes (to the extent that Balzac makes use of it) is for him simply a framework for a survey of contemporary political events. Here again it is evident that modern history occupies an altogether disproportionate amount of space, if we take the mediaeval and renaissance mirrors as a standard. But there is more to it than this: a peculiar change in the interpretation of both ancient and modern history is also involved. On the one hand, modern history is the stage for the clash of the ideal Prince and the Tyrant personified, a feature previously reserved for ancient history (i.e. the defeat of Tarquinius Superbus); and since it is contemporary, it is depicted in a much more concrete and detailed manner than was customary. On the other hand, ancient history (though occasionally affording *exempla*) is an inferior variety of the same struggles; as princes the ancients were much below Louis XIII in every way, while as tyrants they are but the shadow of Philip of Spain. Indeed, when Balzac discusses the aspirations of Philip, he contrasts them to those of the Greeks and Romans, and points out that the latter at least had better reasons for their conquests than Philip, since beyond their frontiers there lived only barbarians to whom they brought enlightenment even if not unmixed with some more sordid transactions. Philip, on the other hand, is in no way superior to the Germans and the Italians whose countries he claims as his own, and cannot even point to that amount of justification. Spain and its people are, much more than the Romans, robbers of all lands and pirates of all the seas.

In contrast to this worst of all tyrants stands Louis XIII, the liberator (at least *in posse*) of Europe. It would be idle to repeat here what has been said before on the subject of the King’s motives were it not that, by making this once more the cornerstone of everything, Balzac now brings in the conception of a new universal monarchy under Louis XIII. This idea, which had been put forward in the Middle Ages (especially by Dante), fitted into the general order we have discussed, and was indeed considered to be the only rational world order which would bring about universal peace and security. How-

ever, we have seen that with Balzac it is not so much this preconception (though there are traces of it) which leads him to postulate universal monarchy as the climax of social organization; it is rather, on the one hand, the perfection of Louis XIII which irresistibly draws all to him, and on the other the logical outcome of centralization, which for Balzac is synonymous with peace. Referring to the countries oppressed by Spain, he writes:

"Let them take heart, for the successor of Charles the Great has come who asks only their consent to remove the yoke from off their neck . . . who feels himself affronted wherever Justice is offended and whose care and thoughts encompass all who suffer and groan."⁶¹

For himself the King wants nothing; even his legitimate claims he puts aside for the moment, that his help may be purely disinterested and that he may not appear to have a closer and more particular interest in the matter than his subjects' safety, nor to make a great enterprise serve the ends of a lesser.⁶² Unlike the Romans, the King does not traffic with his gifts and courtesies; his courage is neither ambitious nor avaricious. Apart from the service of God and the general welfare of Christendom he toils only for reputation and glory. He has been drawn to his neighbours only by their need and his honour, and has only carried his arms out of his king-

⁶¹ What Balzac says about the Papacy, Naples, Venice, Florence and other states is of slight interest, being little else than a rhetorically amplified expression of hope that they will rise to the occasion and help Louis XIII to perform his task of bringing peace and liberty to the whole of Europe. He notes, however, that contrary to the general belief, the might of Spain is not as great as people suppose: "Regardez une poignée de gens, qui le brave et le bat ordinairement . . . regardez un petit marais, qui resiste à tous ses Royaumes, et à toutes ses forces; considérez une puissance qui flotte tousiours et despend en partie du vent et de la tempeste, qui tient bon neanmoins contre sa formidable Monarchie. Ces Pescheurs, qu'il mesprisoit si fort au commencement, ont mis dans leurs filets ses villes et ses provinces . . . Ne sont-ce pas les choses foibles de ce Monde que Dieu a eslevés pour confondre les fortes? N'est-ce pas le grain de sable, dont il bride la fureur de l'Océan? Ne vous souvient-il pas de la petite pierre qui renversa la grande statue?"

Balzac, as we have noted before, will often put forward a point of view which shows that, while his understanding of many things was not profound, he nevertheless could at times see through the appearance of things and disclose their essence. Thus, having demonstrated with the example of the Netherlands that Spain is by no means invincible, he adds subsequently that in reality much of the

Spanish power is due, not so much to any inherent strength, as to the multitude of warring interests amongst those who might oppose her, so that at no time has she to face their united strength before which she would soon crumble. This he states with specific reference to Germany: "La division cessant parmy eux, la puissance de l'Espagnol cesse en leur pays, et le mesme iour qu'ils s'accorderont, il en sera chassé."

⁶² Again there follows a comparison unfavourable to the Ancients. The Romans, he says, did not behave thus to their Allies. The citizens were virtuous whilst the Republic was unjust. (In passing, it may be noted that this remark would have been impossible in the Middle Ages; for behind it lies a developed conception of the citizen's (private) virtue as contrasted with the Republic's (public) injustice, the former in no way excluding the latter.) Utility which they despised at home formed the essence of their deliberations in the Senate; and though they decked their designs with false colours and high-sounding names, still in everything they consulted their interest, and everything, either openly or deviously, served only their Empire. Almost all their usurpations began as a defence of another's property, and in helping the weak against the strong, they conquered half the world and vanquished the other.

dom in order to learn 'avecque fruit' of the quarrels between princes, to receive with authority the complaints of the afflicted, to conserve those who were within their rights and dispense universal justice. That really is what it means to be a King and be God's deputy on earth. It is to exercise a universally salutary power which is consistent with all forms of government, and embrace in common protection both what is far and what is near.

To speak plainly [Balzac opines], it is apparent that God intended that there should be no universal monarch other than the King, nor other hands to carry 'la Machine qu'il a bastie.' God does not like attempts to change the order He has established among men, and that those who come last quarrel over positions He has already allotted, troubling the economy of the Universe He has instituted. Violent usurpations displease Him and He had rather His children suffer injustice than commit it."

Balzac then repeats once more (speaking of the King):

"It is not to enrich himself. . . . His plans need cause no anxiety, his arms no jealousy, for they defend only good causes; they bring peace and security to the nations which must hold them in as great respect as the Romans held the shields which fell out of the sky. This is not Hannibal who crosses the Alps . . . it is Pippin, or Charlemagne who wishes once more to liberate Italy. To the Italians he is no foreigner as he is Italian on his mother's side. And there is even an oracle, if we are to follow the fashion: a 'grand personage' (Machiavelli) wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici over a century ago that 'Italy hopes that the Medici will give her someone who will deliver her.' It is indubitably true that the spirit that dictated these words saw from afar the marriage of Henry the Great, meant us to understand it was referring to Louis the Just and was pointing to the marvels we have seen, and still will see, if the Italians do not stubbornly fight against their good luck and prefer things of slight value to their liberty."

Before I end this section, a note on Balzac's attitude to war is in place, as he subject figures in most mirrors of princes. He is not against war as such; indeed, it is probable that such a conception as war unrelated to some end was entirely foreign to him. War is waged with a purpose in view, and according as this is good or bad, so the war is just or unjust, the end justifying the means. War falls thus into the spheres of both justice and prudence, since it can be a just necessity, a small evil to avoid a greater, or to acquire a lasting good. A good war, however, is always characterized by one fact: that it aims at peace and is undertaken in order to promote peace. Obviously there is, in consequence, a sort of grading of wars, those which promote universal peace being of the highest order. It is, of course, just this war that Balzac is pleading for, becoming a propagandist in this respect too for the crushing of Spain and the French hegemony of Europe.

It is a league against Spain that he asks for, in which England and Sweden can also take their part; in the face of so great a danger, all scruples and private interests must be abandoned, and nations join together as a stoic

and an epicurean once did when it came to saving the Republic (Brutus and Cassius joined forces to murder Caesar).

Louis XIII is by his experience most fitted to be the leader of this glorious enterprise, which will bring general peace and liberty to the nations. "What ever it may be," Balzac writes,

"the King is resolved to do what those princes did whom history remembers as demi-gods. He walks in the footsteps of those great kings, sworn enemies of evil-doers, protectors of the good, peace-makers on land and sea, who sought no other rewards for their victories than the peace of the world. He knows he is the heir of one who has more right than Constantine to be called the benefactor of the Church and whose name is still to be seen in Ravenna on a marble slab with this inscription: 'He was the first who opened the road to the growth and spread of the Church.' Such men are an imperious example to all, such that the most rebellious dare not disobey; and, since the bitterness so often found in virtue is sweetened by the vanity that lies in imitating him, it would be a reproof to all mankind did it not happen that in a short time the King's saintly life, without calling together states general and assemblies of notables, produced a voluntary reform of the whole state, and elsewhere an honest attempt to do as well as we."

With this the triumph is finished. Louis XIII is the *summa fastigia principum* and has through the virtues been led to the "Palais de la Gloire" where he reigns supreme.

V

To conclude, there remains one question to answer: Is *Le Prince* a mirror of princes?

The answer must be that, since Balzac has abandoned the essential element of mirrors of princes (that of being portraits of ideal princes the pattern of which is, to echo a famous sentence, laid up in heaven, but to which the princes of this world should endeavour to conform in both character and behaviour), *Le Prince* no longer falls into this category.

Balzac, as was said earlier, transformed the mirror of princes to his purposes. Everything that had heretofore been conceived of as a fitting attribute of an ideal prince, Balzac attributes to the mortal Louis XIII. For that reason, *Le Prince* has clear affinities with the ideals—ethical and political—which form the substance of mirrors of princes. But his work is not to be understood unless it be in terms of the development of the idea of divine right which, in its picture of Louis XIII, it puts forward in a brilliant propagandistic manner. *Le Prince* helps to create a climate of opinion in which the ideological justifications for absolute rule become acceptable to the generality of people who concerned themselves with the legitimacy of absolutism.⁶³ It is, therefore,

⁶³ Henri Sée, *Les Idées Politiques en France au XVII^e Siècle*, Paris, 1923, p. 82, mentions Balzac as foreshadowing absolute monarchy. Speaking of the "raison d'état," he adds:

"Nul n'en a fait une apologie plus cynique et n'en a montré plus nettement la portée que Balzac dans le *Prince*."

a transformation of a tradition to suit the specific conditions of France in the early seventeenth century. This is its merit and originality. For, no matter how unimportant it appears to be now—but one, though a supremely excellent one from the literary point of view, of a mass of pamphlets concerned with bruiting about the extent and majesty of an absolute ruler's power—it must nevertheless be remembered that in its day it said something in many respects shocking. To people accustomed to the old order of things in which the power of princes was checked in various ways by the strength of the nobility, the towns, custom and a host of interconnected aspects of a vanishing social organization, this deification of the prince and the assertion of the legitimate boundlessness of his power was little short of criminal, an attack on the very foundations and principles of good government and royal justice as previously (and at the time still by many) understood and accepted. Balzac reveals himself as more farsighted than those who accused him of "machia-vellianism." To their scornful comment that kingship would degenerate into tyranny were princes to follow Balzac's pernicious suggestions, history answers that Balzac's ideas pale before the fully-fledged institutions of absolutism. His *Prince* makes but a poor showing in comparison with the *Roi Soleil* whom it announces.

No one would suggest that Balzac's *Le Prince* is an epoch-making work. It is a brilliant piece of propaganda by a writer who had understood at least something of the nature of power politics. As was said before, from it alone it is not possible to come to a proper judgment of the extent of this understanding. We may conjecture; but that is an idle pastime. What we must, and can, say, is that, despite all the ideological trimmings, Balzac has in *Le Prince* expressed in a very general way the indubitably correct idea that power in hands not responsible to those over whom it is exercised really knows no limit; that before it private right is a privilege; and that to guarantee itself it will set this right aside, "taking measures upon a slight suspicion or some passing mistrust and preventing the danger even by the death of those whom it suspects."